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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8083
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002191

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: IDF KILLS WANTED HAMAS ACTIVIST IN HEBRON

REF: A.) JERUSALEM 2175; B.) JERUSALEM 1350; C.)
JERUSALEM 1357; D.) JERUSALEM 1855

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY. A WANTED HAMAS IZZ ED-DIN AL-QASSAM CELL MEMBER, TAHIR QAFISHA, WAS AMBUSHED AND SHOT DEAD BY AN UNDERCOVER UNIT OF THE ISRAELI BORDER POLICE JUNE 29 AT THE NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO HEBRON. TWO HOMES IN WHICH QAFISHA ALLEGEDLY HID WERE DEMOLISHED, AS WELL AS A STABLE AND MORE THAN 100 TREES IN THE AREA (REFTEL A). ISRAELI MILITARY SOURCES SAID QAFISHA WAS THE LAST KNOWN MEMBER OF A HEBRON IZZ ED-DIN AL-QASSAM CELL ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF AT LEAST SIX ISRAELIS IN DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS OVER THE PAST YEAR. THE DEMOLITIONS HAVE ANGERED HEBRONITES, WHO REMAIN UNDER CURFEW AS A RESULT OF THE OPERATION. END SUMMARY.

13. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, AN UNDERCOVER UNIT OF THE ISRAELI BORDER POLICE ACTING ON INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION SURROUNDED A HOUSE AT THE NORTHERN ENTRANCE OF HEBRON AT 3:30 AM JUNE 29 IN WHICH WANTED HAMAS ACTIVIST TAHIR QAFISHA WAS REPORTEDLY HIDING. HEBRONITES SAID AN ISRAELI HELICOPTER HOVERED OVER THE AREA SHINING A SEARCH LIGHT AS THE OPERATION WAS CONDUCTED. IDF SOURCES SAID QAFISHA REFUSED TO SURRENDER. IT IS UNCLEAR WHO FIRED FIRST, BUT SHOOTING BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE SOLDIERS AND QAFISHA, WHO SERIOUSLY WOUNDED A SOLDIER IN THE HEAD BEFORE HE WAS SHOT DEAD AS HE TRIED TO BREAK THROUGH THE CORDON OF SOLDIERS SURROUNDING HIM.

14. ALTHOUGH THE OPERATION WAS OVER BY 5:30 AM, ACCORDING TO UNRWA SOURCES, THE SOLDIERS CONTINUED TO SWEEP THE AREA FOR ADDITIONAL SUSPECTS MANY HOURS AFTER. PRESS FOOTAGE SHOWED SOLDIERS COMBING ORCHARDS AND BEATING AN UNARMED MAN AS THEY TOOK HIM AWAY FOR QUESTIONING. THE TWO HOUSES IN WHICH QAFISHA REPORTEDLY HID--OWNED BY THE FAMILIES OF UTHMAN AL-FALAH AND MUHAMMAD DANHASH--WERE HIT WITH MISSILES AND THEN BULLDOZED. THE FAMILY MEMBERS WERE REPORTEDLY EVICTED WEARING ONLY THEIR NIGHT CLOTHES AND WERE FORBIDDEN TO TAKE ANYTHING WITH THEM. A STABLE FILLED WITH SHEEP BELONGING TO THE DANHASH FAMILY WAS ALSO HIT WITH MISSILES AND THEN BULLDOZED, AND A NEARBY GROVE OF ABOUT 100 GRAPE VINES WERE PLOWED UNDER.

15. ACCORDING TO PRESS, THE HEBRON AREA COMMANDER SAID DESTROYING THE HOMES AND TREES WAS STANDARD PRACTICE BECAUSE THE TROOPS SUSPECTED MORE GUNMEN COULD BE HIDING THERE. THE FALAH AND DANHASH FAMILIES REJECTED THAT, SAYING THEIR HOMES WERE NOT HIT WITH MISSILES UNTIL QAFISHA WAS CONFIRMED TO BE DEAD AND HIS BODY WAS TAKEN AWAY. THEY TOLD ARAB JOURNALISTS THAT QAFISHA WAS NEVER IN THEIR HOMES BUT WAS INSTEAD SLEEPING IN THE VINEYARD. ACCORDING TO UNRWA SOURCES JUNE 30, HEBRON IS STILL CLOSED AND UNDER CURFEW.

¶6. IDF SOURCES TOLD THE PRESS THAT QAFISHA WAS THE LAST KNOWN REMAINING MEMBER OF A HEBRON MAMAS CELL THAT WAS ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF AT LEAST SIX ISRAELIS IN DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS IN HEBRON OVER THE PAST YEAR AS WELL AS THE WOUNDING OF SEVERAL SOLDIERS IN SHOOTING ATTACKS ON VEHICLES AND THE ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING OF A SETTLER. THE FOUR OTHER KNOWN CELL MEMBERS WERE TRACKED DOWN AND KILLED IN TWO SEPARATE OPERATIONS BY UNDERCOVER ISRAELI SECURITY UNITS OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS (REFTELS B, C AND D). ACCORDING TO PRESS, MILITARY SOURCES ESTIMATE TWO OTHER MAMAS CELLS WITH A TOTAL OF FIVE MEMBERS ARE STILL AT LARGE IN HEBRON.

¶7. COMMENT. THE IDF OPERATION, ESPECIALLY THE DEMOLITION OF TWO HOMES, HAS CREATED ANGER IN HEBRON WHERE THE POPULATION IS ALREADY CRITICAL OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND SEES LITTLE CHANCE FOR ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SITUATION IN THE NEAR TERM. ALTHOUGH UNDERCOVER KILLINGS OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS CELL DID NOT PROVOKE A RETALIATORY ATTACK BY MAMAS MEMBERS--PROBABLY AS A RESULT OF HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE PA TO STOP ATTACKS AND PUBLIC AVERSION TO SUCH ATTACKS--ONE CAN NOT RULE OUT A RETALIATORY ATTACK AGAINST ISRAELIS AT THIS CRITICAL TIME, ON THE EVE OF WHAT MANY PALESTINIANS CONSIDER TO BE A DEADLINE, NOT A TARGET DATE, FOR A REDEPLOYMENT AGREEMENT.

¶8. COMMENT CONTINUED. ALTHOUGH THE IDF CLAIMED THAT QAFISHA REFUSED TO SURRENDER--AND HE HAS CLEARLY ARMED AND APPARENTLY SHOT A SOLDIER--ISRAELI UNDERCOVER UNITS ON OPERATIONS TO FIND WANTED MEN HAVE GENERALLY MADE LITTLE ATTEMPT TO ARREST OR BRING TO TRIAL THEIR TARGETS. THE FOUR OTHER ALLEGED MEMBERS OF THIS MAMAS CELL, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE ALL KILLED ON SITE EVEN THOUGH SOME WERE UNARMED.

ABINGTON